

THE GREEN THUMB

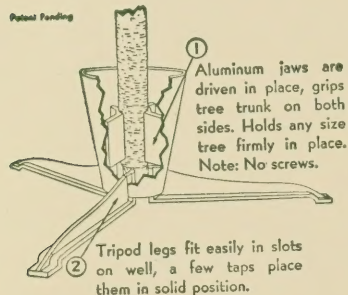
PUBLISHED BY ECCLES NURSERIES AS AN AID TO CHRISTMAS TREE GROWING

FACTS:

Scotch Pine brought one dollar a foot wholesale in Philadelphia late in the season.

Thirty million Christmas trees were sold last year in the U. S. A.

Over 300 attended the meeting of the Penna. Christmas Tree Growers at Eccles Nurseries the past August.



We have secured the exclusive distributorship for this holder in a number of states. Many of our customers made extra money last Christmas.

Retails—\$3.49 ea.

Your Cost—\$27.00 per doz.

Gravley Tractor

Many growers have found this to be the real machine for mowing in their plantations. We will be happy to forward literature on request.

SHEARING

In beginning I might note that considerable controversy even exists in this name shearing. In some states pruning is the accepted term, while shaping is commonly used in other areas. For this particular article we will accept shearing as the official terminology.

Early in the 1940s a grower in eastern Pennsylvania undertook an extensive shearing program with considerable success, in that he was able to produce bushy trees and cut a considerably larger number of trees in his plantations. Study of this program by State University officials resulted in its being rapidly passed along to other growers and with the advent of the Christmas Tree Growers Organizations it rapidly became accepted as a must in producing good quality trees.

As might be expected in something relatively new, problems developed that were totally unexpected. Over emphasis in the program resulted often in balls rather than symmetrical shaped trees. Scattering of buds along the terminal after cutting was found rather than even bud sets. Often times large bunches of irregular branches formed what has been commonly referred to as squirrel's nests and caused very undesirable appearances. Growers soon found they had created a monster, once started must be continued and if begun with over all shearing soon developed into a large program with experienced help necessary at shearing time.

We at Eccles Nurseries began shearing our plantations in 1946 and at that time the trees started on were about 3 to 4 feet in height. We sheared the top terminal growth to a height of 8 to 12 inches and then the first swirl of lateral branches back to from 4 to 6 inches. We sold this block in 1949 and 1950. Were they ideal trees? No: they were bushy but far too wide for their height. With the modern home and smaller living room, and the advent of television, the wide bulky tree is no longer desirable. In ensuing years we continued our program, traveling all over the states and observing other methods, ideas and most of all, results of other growers. After this

Doo Klip Shearers

We have found this long handle shearers with the rubber grips to be the most practical for this job of shearing. As a result we secured a distributorship and can save you money.

Price \$4.25 each—F.O.B., Rimersburg, Pa.

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Spring planting time is once again with us and again we would like to impress on each one the importance of taking care of their seedlings as they arrive from the nursery in the spring.

You just can't let them lie around and expect good results. If you don't remove them from the original bundle at once, you're in for trouble. Take a few minutes, remove the packing moss and immerse the roots in a pail of water, under no conditions can sun or wind be permitted to reach these roots. After the roots are wet, dig a trench long enough and deep enough to permit the roots to be straight out and the seedlings in a thin row—not in bunches. Pack the dirt firmly and water again. Remember, you have an investment to protect.

extensive research program we finally practiced it in our own plantations and feel that our current method which we offer in this publication will produce good bushy trees of natural appearance and symmetrical shape in a producing cost and time program acceptable to everyone.

Shearing of Pines

Perhaps the very first factor to consider in beginning is time. When is the correct time to shear that the very best bud set will result, not the stringing of buds as previously mentioned. Naturally seasons vary in different areas so dates can be considered as uncertain. Let's say it this way: When your trees take their spring growth or break last years buds and form long slender candles usually starting in May and ending the latter part of June. You will note few needles along this candle, but once near maximum growth is reached the needles break out of the wax and begin to grow. The very best time for shearing begins when these new needles are one-half the length of the older needles on the tree. This will normally give you two weeks shearing time for best results.

What to cut brings another when into the picture. When is a tree big enough to start on. We will endeavor to answer this when, and what, together.

To avoid having very wide trees, too round a tree and too much side shearing we have found it best to start very early rather than wait until the tree is 3 or 4 feet high. (If your trees are currently that size we suggest you read this publication carefully and enter this method of shearing at the time suggested in a later paragraph). Our first shearing begins when the trees are 18 to 24 inches high. It consists of standing over the tree and shearing back the side branches within a few inches of the old years growth. The top or terminal growth of the tree is untouched. This terminal is not cut the first year unless the growth exceeds 12 inches. If that occurs and it is not characteristic we cut the top or terminal back to 12 inches. When we say 12 inches, that's it, not 8 or 10. This accurate cutting can easily be obtained by marking a line with paint

on your shearers 12 inches back from the points and using this as a rule.

The year following, or normally the third year the trees are in the field, we again go through the planting, this time, however, we do not bother the lateral or side branches except the top swirl. The leader, top, or terminal, whichever you choose to call it, is cut back to 12 inches and the first swirl of branches under this leader are cut back to six inches, making very sure that each one is tipped even though it might be less than the desired six inches to begin with. In the case of the leader or top not being 12 inches you will find this to be rare since the cutting the previous year will have stimulated its growth. In the extreme cases where this occurs, nip one inch from this top and cut the top swirl of side branches back to one-half the length of this leader.

Now your trees are four feet high and it's June again. Here is what you do, follow the same routine as the previous year cutting only the top and first swirl and making sure the top cut is exactly 12 inches. This now is the year you will find some trees not shaping up as well as others. As you come to these trees, and there won't be many, go over the entire tree cutting the sides back as well as the top and first swirl. This is the year if your trees are 3 to 4 feet in height, to adopt the method described in the above paragraph.

Another year and they are just about ready for market. Don't lose money now by letting them go in the hopes that they will sell. Go through again and follow exactly the same procedure as the previous year. If some retailers want them bad enough, this little cutting won't bother them, but you must remember that to miss this year will really hurt. After this shearing the plantation should be ready for market and no further shearing would be suggested.

Just a few "Hows," the most important of which is the cut. Try, and this is especially important, on the top or terminal to make your cut diagonal rather than perfectly straight across. This helps keep the tree from gradually bowing and prevents double tops.

Good shears are important. We use Doo Klip long handle shears for most of the work but it is well for each person shearing to carry in their pocket a Wiss hand shears. A clean cut is very important and this combination will insure it. If a small can of kerosene is taken along to the field you will find it invaluable in keeping the pitch off the blades of the shears.

Spruce and Fir

This is a job that is relatively simple, spruce and fir, unlike pine, form buds at intervals the entire way along the new years growth rather than just at the tip of branches. This permits you to shear them throughout the year rather than at one set time.

In shearing spruce and fir we merely shape the tree each year, being certain not to cut further back than the last bud on each branch. Due to the variation of growth within spruce and fir plantings no set year for beginning can be stated, rather each planter will find it necessary to watch his trees and correct them as the occasion arises.

Shearing will without a doubt provide a large return for a small investment but it must be done right. You must visualize the tree that you wish to produce. You must realize that in cutting a tree back you are not limiting the growth of that tree but promoting more growth in the form of additional branches.

Eccles Nurseries are happy to offer this publication and hope it will be of value to you. We welcome you to our nursery and will be more than pleased to escort you into the field.

Our next issue of the Green Thumb will deal with discoloration of Scotch Pine, what we are doing about it and how much credence can be placed in claims of special strains. We shall also include an article on fertilization of Christmas trees.

THANKS FOR READING

R. M. ECCLES, Owner

R. DENTON, Mgr.-Editor

Eccles Nurseries

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Clarion County

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Seedlings . . . Transplants

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